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Patterns of our Footsteps: Topophilia, rhythm, and diversity in urban landscapes

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Abstract: Topophilia, or love of place, has been described as a desirable outcome of urban planning. The rhythms of movement within a city can help build topophilia, particularly if diverse rhythms bring together disparate groups, creating spaces of urban encounter. Multi-rhythmic spaces can partly be a product of deliberate design; spaces of overlapping rhythms create 'space' for spontaneous connections that can build a sense of community and social capital. In contrast, spaces dominated by single rhythms can be dead spaces a good deal of the time, such as monochronous commuter corridors. Granville Island, Canada is given as an example of a designed space that facilitates both the movement of people in diverse ways at different times, and incorporates non-human rhythms as well. The space does, however, contain unconscious and invisible barriers created for diverse ethnic, income and 'others' that could be addressed with adaptive and deliberative planning for inclusion.

Keywords: space, time, rhythm, sustainable urban development, public markets, topophilia

Introduction

The love of urban space is a long-standing theme in the study of the city. Topophilia, or love of place (an idea introduced by Tuan, 1974) has emerged as a desired goal of the revitalization of city spaces, often appearing in conjunction with loose terms such as "livable" or sustainable. The idea of urbanity as a normative positive has been explored by many writers, flowing from Jacobs work (1969) stating that cities are the crucibles of innovation in a region's economy. This is highlighted extensively by the work of Florida (2002), who argues cities are "creative centres" of society, the places where the creative classes come together. A more measured approach is taken by Zukin (1982, from "Loft living" onward), but as a whole the understanding of urban place as social good has emerged as what is sometimes called the "New York School" (Judd, 2011). Judd also rightly notes there is much to critique in the somewhat over-exuberant embracing of the New York school, the idea that people choose to spend time in certain spaces at least partly out of desire for those spaces remains a powerful one.

Although there is an extensive critique of the gentrification that goes hand in hand from the revitalization of cities (including Smith, 1996; Lees et al., 2008; Dale & Newman, 2009, and Burnett, 2014 in the case study city); there is also a spatially grounded exploration of what makes an urban space vital, or even loved. In *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, for example, William Whyte highlights elements such as shade, places to sit, water features, and nearby food as adding to the vitality of place (1980). In Newman et al. (2011), market spaces are explored in terms of flow of human traffic through space, and are demonstrated to be places of encounter and dwelling in addition to places for consumer activities. Non-human elements of urban spaces have also been highlighted as important as "non-human animal citizens" (Wolch, 1998, Amin, 2008; Newman & Dale, 2013), and the interaction between human urban systems and non-human systems adds an interesting element for consideration. However, less has been said about the temporal elements of urban space. In this paper, we argue that topophilic places are often multi-rhythmic; they are occupied over a diverse range of times, by a diverse cross section of people, and seldom present as dead space. Adequate green space elements encourage non-human rhythms in these spaces as well, although other benefits of greening have been highlighted

elsewhere (Fuller et al, 2007: Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2003, for example). In short these are places where there is activity, and that activity is varied and diverse.

Topophilia is often associated with a "sense of place". The idea of sense of place is a subjective one; as is the idea of placelessness. Relph delves much deeper into the idea of placelessness in his 1976 work *Place and Placelessness*. He noted that places are not experienced as independent, clearly defined entities, but in a context of setting, ritual, people, experience, and in context with other places (29). He notes that there is a geography of places, and a placeless geography, and that one of these two landscapes is greatly preferable to the other (141). May and Thrift continue in this tradition, and argue that non-places are also non-events (2001); things don't happen there. Marc Augé's work *Nonplace* highlights the aura of transience that to him eroded any sense of place in such spaces. He describes non-place as stripped of deeper meaning; places of circulation, culture, and communication (1995: 64). It should be noted, though it was not an element of our study, that actions do not need to be sanctioned to contribute to a space's sense of place. The non-human is seldom expressly encouraged in the modern cityscape; yet esthetics may play a critical role in our understanding of ecosystems (Gobster et al, 2007), which then contributes to sustaining non-human rhythms. Nassauer (1995) argues that nature is identified with the picturesque, which is a cultural, not an ecological perspective, and this understanding in turn influences the design of urban green space. Although we have evolved into a highly mobile species, we remain a ‘domicentric’ species that holds special attachments to and strong preferences for the places that we call home and in which we are comfortable (Lewicks, 2011).

Water bodies in particular also carry past associations with specific usage and historical trajectories; cultural identity is strongly associated with the ways in which people interact with their landscapes and places become "time thickened" (Stephenson, 2008). For example, the coast forms the interface between two dramatically different environments, marine and terrestrial, and thus is dynamic, complex, and contains a plethora of unique lifecycles and interactions that bridge land and sea (Hoffemester et al, 2012). In particular, edges and boundaries when two different ecosystems meet, for example, a river and the ocean, are significant niches of biological and structural diversity that is mapped out on the built realm through specific usage and historical trajectories. In our case study, the presence of shoreline allows significant interaction between marine species and humans dwelling in the space. The open viewscape created by the presence of the ocean, and sightlines to the nearby heavily-forested mountains, was also a critical element in the experience of the user. The coast forms the interface between two dramatically different environments, marine and terrestrial, and thus is dynamic, complex, and contains a plethora of unique lifecycles and interactions that bridge land and sea (Hoffemester et al, 2012). Edges affect the flow of nutrients, organisms, and it is our contention that urban spaces that design with ecological natural features, and facilitate diverse accessibility to amenities day and night are more vital spaces.

Culturally, similar forces are at work; for example, the morphology present where historic town cores exist within a surrounding conurban landscape provides a multifunctional innovative space (Conzen 2009). In ecosystems, ‘soft’ complex edges increase the flow of materials, whereas ‘hard’ edges such as those typically found between built and non-built environments often decrease flows—homogeneity (no edges) has no movement or flow at all (Forman, 1995). In the case study presented below, a maritime ‘edge’ recalls a very specific history in the built environment; elements of the maritime anchor the current structure of the space, standing as reminders of the historic spaces of production present in the area.

It has been argued that the design of space partly determines the degree of our sociability, for example in Oldenburg (1989), who argued very forcefully for the normative good of shared spaces beyond the confines of home and work. Space can create and encourage a web of relationships with other people who know and recognize each other, who come together for some common purposes, who share in the common benefits of shared resources, and above all who share a common identity, even if that identity is a temporary identity acquired through the act of passing through and interacting with the space. This relationship is a dialectic; Ingold (1993) further argues, "a place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there" (156). Our emotional connection with a place underlies this web of relationships, and this connection exists at the root of our 'sense of community' (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). We argue this effect is strengthened by diverse temporal rhythms that, as noted in the multifunctionality literature, create "an integration of different functions within the same or overlapping land unit, at the same or overlapping in time" (Brandt & Vejre, 2004: 25).

Oldenburg (1989) calls these spaces thirdspace, a term used by different theorists in slightly different ways; the spaces where people spend time that are neither home nor work, in his terms. Soja uses thirdspace in a more nuanced way; not all Oldenburg third spaces would fit Soja's definition of a thirdspace where "everything comes together. . .subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the trans-disciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (Soja, 1996, p. 57). In some ways, Thirdspace is transcendent, transforming domination of relationships or connections into symmetry, a 'polyrhythmic ensemble' (Crang, 2000). In this sense third spaces are where space and place are reconciled, and where the potential for urban interaction is highest. We contend that the presence of multiple rhythms within a space adds a complexity that builds to the love of the space.

As noted, such spaces don't have to be planned; in fact some of the best urban spaces evolve naturally. Campo and Ryan (2008) offer the example of informal, often unplanned nightlife districts and entertainment zones that coexist with seemingly hollowed-out downtown cores and the commercial districts that lie on their fringes, with underutilized retail corridors, and with apparently empty industrial areas. Such places, apparently dead spaces in the light of day, offer room for informal, spontaneous, and self-organized nightlife to develop. The absence of planned multi-functionality makes such spaces possible, as nocturnal social spaces are easily crowded out by residential uses. Although policymakers often perceive these unplanned entertainment zones as urban dangers to be regulated away, their "ephemeral, temporal quality and their occupation of seemingly marginal buildings, spaces and urban precincts belie the critical vitality that they contribute to otherwise dead spaces in American downtowns" (p. 292). These sorts of unscripted uses of space allow for spontaneous urban interaction beyond that dictated by planners and policymakers; however, efforts to rid cities of marginal spaces also destroy important opportunities for self-organized urbanity. While unplanned urban life is a subject for further study, this study takes as its focus a popular urban centre in order to study the various rhythms present in a multifunctional space.

Methodology

The research was conducted using a mixed-method case study approach similar to that described by Yin (2003), exploring a single case study. Granville Island in Vancouver, Canada, was observed longitudinally over three years to map the flows and use patterns through a process similar to Lefebvre's "rhythmanalysis" (1974). Case study research is an appropriate methodology when a holistic in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin et al, 1991) and works well in the study of contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2003). Data collection followed the mixed methods approach as outlined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2003) and involved content analysis of grey literature in addition to observational techniques.

The guiding method of the study was a focus on temporal action within a spatial framework. The dynamic features of place, space, time and rhythm and their contribution to more sustainable communities (Dale et al. 2012) and urban centres is still relatively under-explored, especially how time and its perceptions can influence human use of space. Lefebvre (1974) argued that everywhere there is an interaction between place, time and expenditure of energy—there is a rhythm; as such, understanding the rhythm of a place is central to understanding the underlying dynamics that govern it.

Granville Island: Third space?

Granville Island is an interesting example of thirdspace, as well as a multi-rhythmic place. Lefebvre talked of the revolution of space, describing spaces as living bodies each with their own distinctive traits (Lefebvre, 1974: 137); though a young city, Vancouver, Canada has evolved from a centre of natural resource production and ports, to one of the most liveable cities in the world.

Considered to be one of the crown jewels in Vancouver's metamorphosis from a sleepy regional centre in a region of primary industry to a major Pacific Rim city of nearly two million people, Granville Island is cited as a model of successful urban renewal. The island's current incarnation, however, is part of an evolution of city building on the site. Granville Island began as a tidal sand bar within False Creek inlet. The inlet was much bigger before Vancouver began, about twice as big, but it was much shallower. The sheltered inlet became the heart of industrial Vancouver, but it was inconveniently shallow and filled with shifting mudflats. In 1911 conservative MP Harry Stevens suggested that an island be built on the sand bar, which would also include dredging of the inlet to improve navigation. The work was done in 1915; a million cubic yards of dredged material was contained within a wooden bulkhead to create an island of 36 acres. Easy access to rail lines, streetcar service, and water transport made the island a huge success as a location of heavy industry. In particular the island was a critical site for the Canadian War effort production during world war two. Originally named “Industrial Island” it was almost immediately renamed Granville Island for the wooden bridge that crossed it. In fact, the city as a whole was briefly known as “Granville”. The Island was a hub of manufacturing for the growing logging industry, and during World War II was heavily guarded, and also was one of the first places in Canada where women entered the workforce.

Vancouver in the 1950's saw a move to suburbanization and proposal for large, auto-centred infrastructure project. Vancouver's current form is largely due to the successful blocking of the construction of freeways, but everyone agreed that something had to be done about false creek. By the 1950s it was polluted and its businesses failing, increasingly dominated by abandoned industrial sites. Local politicians campaigned to fill the inlet entirely, but the cost was too high. A new Granville bridge was built, its South footings sitting on the Island. The loss of streetcar service in the city cut the island off beneath its bridge, and by the 1960's it was a ruin plagued by fire. It was tied to the South shore by fill at this time, in a desperate and futile attempt to attract business. However a bigger vision was needed.

The Island was owned federally, by the National Harbour Board. A federal MP, the Honourable Ron Basford, took on the idea of a renewed Granville Island as a project, to be a public space based on Copenhagen's Tivoli gardens. In 1973, the Island was brought under the control of the CMHC. The centrepiece of the development was to be a public market, a bold decision given that markets were disappearing at the time from the North American city. The space was not intuitively desirable; it sits beneath a major bridge, is difficult to access from public transit, and was at the time surrounded by vacant industrial lands.

What was created remains unique in Canada. Outside of the control of city bylaws, the Island is a space of meandering alleyways, scarce parking, and extremely diverse use. It boasts the public market, artists and their studios, a university campus, a hotel, several theatres, the community centre for False Creek South, a boatworks, and a range of industry including the Ocean Cement Works. Some people wonder about the cement works, but it represents the vision the designers were trying to capture; a true mixed use space. For a small space there is a surprising amount of green space and nature has been highlighted through sightlines to the water. A success from its opening, Granville Island spurred the redevelopment of much of the South shore of False Creek, setting the stage for the major redevelopment during the world fair of Expo '86. Today, False Creek is the centre of the Vancouverist movement.

The Island is supported by the housing that has grown up around the site, with much of the business coming from within a five kilometre catchment (Gourley, 1988). People from the surrounding areas pour in on foot and actually use the aquabus to travel over from the central Vancouver core. Tourists, of course, also flock to the Island; it is the single largest tourist attraction in the city. The Island's public spaces are busy over a very extended day, with the market spaces busy in the mornings and secondarily in the afternoons, the university area busy during the school day, and the theatre spaces, the restaurants and community centre busy in the evening.

The public squares and the market in particular are extremely well used. People linger on the island, often to sit and eat while looking at the water. The Island opens onto the water through sightlines, using the mountains and city as backdrop. Ocean wildlife can often be seen from the market square, and the use of greenspace gives the island a relaxed and open space feeling despite its extraordinary density. The 270 businesses and services on the Island are extremely diverse, though focused on food, arts, and design. Thirty restaurants and cafes serve the island and another forty businesses sell specialty foods. The public market has emerged as a centrepiece of the Island. This public space has extensive views to the harbour and mountains and provides a

site to sample different foods from around the world. The market is open seven days a week for most of the year and is utilized by Vancouver chefs and has served as a point of introduction for new and interesting varieties. That point is central; Vancouver is home to a distinct West Coast cuisine pioneered by local chefs. There is the regular flow of the university students, the morning shoppers, the afternoon strollers, and the evening theatre-goers, as well as many tourists. The Island is seldom quiet, and this coming and going makes the space very vibrant, particularly when one considers that the entire thing is under a bridge. The many rhythms of the island prevent the space from ever really being monochronous, or what we refer to here as 'deadspace.' In addition, the Island opens into the surrounding marine environment, allowing for frequent interactions with the non-human rhythms in the surrounding spaces. Natural rhythms break the hard boundary between ocean and land; the vibrant seabird population clusters around the market, and seals and fish are easily viewed from the dock. The outcome of the island redevelopment is a space that elicits topophilia from a wide range of visitors; the island is successful both with locals and is the most visited tourist attraction in Vancouver. It is a popular and well-used thirdspace where different rhythms allow for both human and non-human encounters.

Our observation of the island reviewed many critical interacting flows stretched over the day and focused on different areas of the island. The public market remained busy at nearly all times, with peaks on the weekends, a seasonal rise associated with summer tourism, and in the early morning chefs were found to use the quiet time to gather supplies. The ferry connections to other parts of the area were observed to bring people to the market from other areas of the city, creating a controlled second access point. Students at the university campus created another strong cycle of activity, as did users of the community centre, who tended to enter the area using a land bridge east of the main entrance of the island. In the evening after the market closed the restaurants remained busy, guests at the hotel provided activity on the far end of the island, and theatre-goers remained active until late in the evening. The only particularly quiet time on the island was between midnight and five am, when the island was largely empty save for urban wildlife such as raccoons. What is interesting is that these groups all interact in such a small (fifty acre) space that there is significant mingling and interaction, a sense of random surprise, even though the entire island is tightly scripted and controlled. Most of the unsanctioned activity witnessed was by non-human actors; the birds can be quite aggressive, and will steal food from diners around the market.

Some of the more interesting rhythms are those created by industry on the island. The boat yards fronting the water tend to be active in summer, and in particular on summer mornings, and the cement works, the most significant industry on the island, functions on an edge in view of shoppers. Eating is a constant presence on the island, with bursts of activity at mealtimes. Together these interacting groups create a sense of busy activity. The overwhelming presence of food on the island instills a rhythm of seasonality; Newman (2012) has argued that Canada's market spaces have helped to establish seasonality as a feature of Canadian cuisine. These seasonal appearances of certain foods draw people to the island on a seasonal basis, inscribing the space with an annual rhythm.

Conclusion

Cities are geographically, culturally, and socially unique, and thus there is no 'one-size-fits-all' formula for designing and optimizing vital space. However, certain approaches and concepts can be used to optimize their design, in particular, Soja's (1994) concept of third space, which describes the cultural, geographical, and historical elements of a place coming together in a manner that immerses the user of a space with the place itself. This approach to conceptualizing space is particularly useful for thinking about vital space as it captures people's potential relationships to place, neighbourhood, and community, and thus can illuminate how to incorporate the diverse range of values, meanings, and beliefs involved in a community's sense of place into space design. Accordingly, the following discussion uses the concept of third space to examine a place we believe represents vital space, Granville Island in Vancouver, Canada, to illustrate how the concept can be applied in designing and developing sustainable communities. Multiple rhythms can bring a sense of place, and a sense of spontaneous action to an urban area, even when that area is tightly controlled and scripted. There is however, a price; not all urbanites are invited to such a space, and in this case the urban morphology and exclusivity of the retailscape restricts the access of lower income urban dwellers.

To return to Soja's concept of thirdspace, he explains they are spaces where the spatial and temporal are joined by the social, "a continuous flow, or a series of snapshots or moments, unfolding of moment after moment, every location in space and each and every moment in time" (1996, p. 82). We argue that what make a space 'special' or 'vital' is that the space is designed to connect people both to the physical place and to the space simultaneously**.** This causes people to connect in diverse and multiple ways to a place, experiencing multiple rhythms depending upon accessibility to multiple uses and time/space. And the design of the space for connection and the time to connect as you move through a particular place, allows for diverse rhythms, as does diverse access to amenities, activities (work and leisure), at different times of the day, including the night. Accessibility to a diversity of ecological, social, cultural and economic amenities, not just economic is critical to vital space. This insight leads us to the notion of Soja's spatial justice, with the implication that urban green spaces are equally social places, products of a society and culture that happen to contain nature, as opposed to places in which nature exists independent of human shaping, perhaps in some ways, critical thirdspaces.

Granville Island's success is a function of reconnecting both place and space (Dale et al, 2012), its ecological features have been fundamentally integrated and sustained into its design; as was walkability as a deliberative traffic calming strategy. In addition, by retaining and recognizing Vancouver's historical development as a major port and industrial production, the space is not mono-functional, for example, confined to merely retail amenities. The island includes recreational space and some green space, but more deliberately opens into the surrounding marine environment, making a space for non-human rhythms as well.

In contrast to Florida's work on the creative class and their attractors to urban space, we argue that it is more than access to amenities, space has to be multipurpose and places become more attractive if they are integrated with functional ecological features. For example, Lees et al.

(2008) established the link between ecological functionality and neighbourhood satisfaction. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between health and space vitality—they are dynamically linked. For example, high street connectivity, reduced surface parking, compact development, mixed land uses and connected green spaces promote walking trips to destinations and transit stops; walking reduces the risks of many disease impacts (Bray et al, 2009; Litman, 2010; Rundle et al, 2007). Access to a diversity of landscape features is critical to human vitality and vital spaces.

The design of space is critically important to its rhythms and to the connection people feel to a place. For example, vital spaces provide a continuum of multiple uses, that is, by designing complexity in both space and time, they reduce monochronous space. This continuum of use, including space for the past, present and future, factoring in motion, fosters greater sociability by connecting to memories of the past in the space. Granville Island exemplifies this by its maintenance of its industrial roots, sustaining the cement industrial site, retaining memory to the province's earlier value as a port.

Although Granville Island is a unique and highly successful experiment in regenerating vacant industrial lands, recall that it sits beneath a major bridge, thus, it is difficult to access from public transit. Its retailscape has become increasingly high end, thus, it is not at all welcoming to many of those who live in Vancouver (see Burnett, 2014). As both an expensive place and a highly scripted space, the Island excludes access by the low-income and the marginalized. The barriers are invisible, yet no less real; and without deliberate planning for inclusion, those who cannot afford to participate in its rhythms are excluded by default. As such, whatever interactions take place between those who enjoy Granville Island, they exclude entire demographic groups who have been excluded from the space and are invisible in the Island urbanity. Highly scripted urban space allows for the creation of diverse rhythms, but can limit social diversity temporally unless there is deliberative programming that facilitates inclusion and diverse socio-cultural rhythms.

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